

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 05318 031611Z

71

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07

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R 031448Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2517

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PBOR PFOR IS

SUBJ: NEW SETTLEMENT PLOY BY GUSH EMUNIM

REFS: (A) TEL AVIV 3217, (B) TEL AVIV 4447

1. GUSH EMUNIM ATTEMPTED TO "SETTLE" A SITE NEAR JERICHO AUGUST 2 IN AN APPARENT FURTHER BID TO PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT, ALREADY AGONIZING OVER A DECISION ON THE FUTURE OF THE QADOUM SETTLEMENT. THE MOVEMENT ATTEMPTED LAST WEEK TO OBTAIN A GOVERNMENT PERMIT TO CAMP IN JERICHO FOR TWO DAYS BUT WAS DENIED PERMISSION. IT THEN ANNOUNCED ON AUGUST 1 ITS INTENTION TO DISPATCH A GROUP TO SETTLE AN UNSPECIFIED SITE IN SAMARIA.

2. THE OPERATION ON AUGUST 2, CONSISTING OF 60 PARTICIPANTS IN A BUS AND SEVERAL CARS, MADE NO EFFORT TO EVADE THE AUTHORITIES. DECLARING THAT JERICHO IS "THE KEY TO ISRAEL", THE GROUP SAID THEIR SETTLEMENT ATTEMPT WAS "A DEMONSTRATION TO PREVENT OUR GOVERNMENT FROM YIELDING IT TO THE ARABS". AMID FANFARE,
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 05318 031611Z

THE GROUP SET OUT FROM JERUSALEM AND WAS EASILY FOLLOWED,

BLOCKED, AND CONTAINED BY ELEMENTS OF THE IDF. THEY OFFERED LITTLE RESISTANCE WHEN THE ARMY FINALLY ORDERED THEM TO LEAVE THE AREA THEIR BUS REACHED, SEVERAL KILOMETERS SHORT OF THEIR DESTINATION NEAR JERICHO.

3. PRESS COMMENT TODAY WAS UNIFORMLY CRITICAL, WITH EVEN HATZOFEH (NRP) ASSERTING THAT THE GROUP SHOULD NOT HAVE MADE THE ATTEMPT TO SETTLE WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE AUTHORITIES. MAARIV'S EDITORIAL, HOWEVER, MINCED NO WORDS IN CHARACTERIZING THE OPERATION AS A PUBLICITY STUNT WITH NO EXPECTATION OF REACHING THE SETTLEMENT SITE.

4. THIS EPISODE FOLLOWED AN UNSCHEDULED DEBATE OVER QADOUM DURING SUNDAY'S (AUGUST 1) REGULAR CABINET MEETING. THE SUBJECT WAS RAISED BY HEALTH MINISTER SHEMTOV (MAPAM), A CONSTANT NEEDLER ON THIS ISSUE WHEN HE ASKED WHETHER REPORTS WERE ACCURATE THAT STATE FUNDS HAD BEEN USED TO ERECT PERMANENT BUILDINGS, INCLUDING AN INDUSTRIAL PLANT, AND WHETHER THIS PLANT HAD BEEN GIVEN ORDERS BY THE DEFENSE MINISTRY. (QADOUM HAS A SMALL WORK SHOP PRODUCING FOR THE DEFENSE MINISTRY UNDER A SUB-CONTRACT.) DEFENSE MINISTER PERES' REPLY THAT THE WORKSHOP WAS BUILT PRIOR TO THE MAY 9 CABINET DECISION AND THAT HE SAW NO OBJECTION TO HIS MINISTRY AWARDED ORDERS IMPLIED POSITIVE ANSWERS TO BOTH QUESTIONS. PRIME MINISTER RABIN INSISTED, HOWEVER, THAT "NO GOVERNMENT AGENCY HAD MADE ANY INVESTMENTS AT THE SITE, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, WHICH WERE CALCULATED TO ENABLE IT TO BECOME PERMANENT". RABIN ADDED THAT PERES HAS ASSURED HIM THAT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY HAD NOT PUT ANY BUDGETARY RESOURCES INTO ENTERPRISES AT QADOUM. AT THIS POINT THE DEBATE BECAME HEATED WITH NRP'S ZEVULUN HAMMER DECLARING THAT AS LONG AS SETTLERS WERE THERE THEY WERE ENTITLED TO FULL RANGE OF SERVICES, INCLUDING EMPLOYMENT.

5. COMMENT: ONE FALLOUT OF THE ENTIRE QADOUM AFFAIR IS THE VIRTUAL IMPOSSIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING ANY ADDITIONAL UN-AUTHORIZED SETTLEMENTS IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. INDEED, MANY OBSERVERS ARGUE THAT HAD RABIN ACTED DECISIVELY AT THE OUTSET, HE COULD HAVE PRECLUDED A QADOUM PROBLEM WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING HIS GOVERNMENT. HIS PROMISE IN MAY THAT THE QADOUM SETTLERS WOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO AN ALTERNATE SITE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 TEL AV 05318 031611Z

"IN THE NEAR FUTURE" LOOKS IN RETROSPECT TO HAVE BEEN A TIME-BUYING POLITICAL EXPEDIENT. HOWEVER, EVERY PASSING DAY INCREASES THE DIFFICULTY OF UP-ROOTING THE QADOUM SETTLERS""WHO ARE STILL GETTING MAXIMUM PUBLICITY AND SOME VOCAL PUBLIC SUPPORT. DUNNIGAN

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